

Amendments to the Claims:

Please add claims 21–47.

Please amend claims 1–5, 8, 10–19, and 20.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for drilling in a floor of an ocean from a structure floating at a surface of the ocean using a rotatable tubular and ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid, comprising the steps of:

positioning at least a portion of a housing above ~~a portion of a riser~~ the surface of the ocean;

allowing the floating structure to move independent of the housing;

communicating the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid from the floating structure to an annulus of the riser surrounding the rotatable tubular, comprising the steps of:

compensating for relative movement of the floating structure and the housing, comprising the steps of:

attaching a flexible conduit between the housing and the floating structure; and

moving the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid through the flexible conduit to the housing, and

moving the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid ~~[[in]]~~ through the housing and into the annulus.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, the step of positioning at least a portion of a housing above ~~a portion of a riser~~ the surface of the ocean comprising the step of:

lowering the housing through a deck of the floating structure.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
creating a mud cap at a ~~predetermined~~ downhole location ~~of the annulus~~.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
moving the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid down the annulus; and
returning a portion of the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid up the rotatable tubular.

5. (Currently Amended) A method for communicating drilling fluid from a structure floating at a surface of the ocean to a casing fixed relative to an ocean floor while rotating within the casing a tubular, comprising the steps of:

fixing a housing with the casing adjacent a first level of the floating structure;
allowing the floating structure to move independent of the housing;
moving the drilling fluid from a second level of the floating structure above the housing down the casing; and
rotating the tubular relative to the housing,
wherein at least a portion of the housing is above the surface of the ocean,
wherein a seal is within the housing, and
wherein the seal contacts and moves with the tubular while the tubular is rotating.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of:
compensating for relative movement of the structure and the housing during the step of moving.

7. (Original) The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of:
pressurizing the drilling fluid to a predetermined pressure as the drilling fluid flows into the casing.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of:
creating a mud cap ~~of a predetermined volume~~ at a ~~predetermined~~ downhole location ~~of the casing~~.

9. (Original) The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of:
returning a portion of the drilling fluid up the tubular to the floating structure while rotating the tubular.
10. (Currently Amended) A method for drilling in a floor of an ocean from a structure floating at a surface of the ocean using a rotatable tubular and ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid, comprising the steps of:
positioning a housing above a portion of a riser;
allowing the floating structure to move independent of the housing; and
communicating the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid from the structure to an annulus of the riser surrounding the rotatable tubular, comprising the step of:
moving the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid through a flexible conduit between the floating structure and the riser.
11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, the step of communicating the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid further comprising the steps of:
moving a predetermined volume of the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid down the annulus to a ~~predetermined~~ downhole location ~~of the riser~~; and
forming a mud cap at the ~~predetermined~~ downhole location ~~of the riser~~.
12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, the step of communicating the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid further comprising the steps of:
moving the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid down the annulus of the riser; and
returning a portion of the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid up the rotatable tubular to the floating structure.
13. (Currently Amended) A method for drilling in a floor of an ocean from a structure floating at a surface of the ocean using a rotatable tubular and ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid, comprising the steps of:
removably inserting a rotatable seal in a portion of a riser;

- allowing the floating structure to move independent of the riser;
- communicating the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid from the floating structure to an annulus of the riser surrounding the rotatable tubular;
- compensating for relative movement of the floating structure and the riser with a flexible conduit; and
- forming a mud cap from the ~~pressurized~~ drilling fluid at a ~~predetermined~~ downhole location ~~of the riser~~.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for drilling in a floor of an ocean from a structure floating at a surface of the ocean using a rotatable tubular and pressurized drilling fluid, comprising the steps of:

- removably inserting a rotatable seal in a portion of a riser;
- allowing the floating structure to move independent of the riser;
- communicating the pressurized drilling fluid from the floating structure to an annulus of the riser surrounding the rotatable tubular;
- compensating for relative movement of the floating structure and the riser with a flexible conduit;
- moving the pressurized drilling fluid down the annulus; and
- moving a portion of the pressurized drilling fluid up the rotatable tubular to the floating structure.

15. (Currently Amended) A system adapted for use with a structure for drilling in a floor of an ocean using a rotatable tubular and drilling fluid when the structure is floating at a surface of the ocean, the system comprising:

- a housing adapted for positioning above a portion of a riser, the housing having a first housing opening to receive the drilling fluid from the floating structure, and
- an assembly ~~removably~~ positioned within the housing, the assembly having a sealing member that rotates relative to the housing and seals the tubular when the tubular is rotating;

wherein the first housing opening is in fluid communication with an annulus of the riser surrounding the rotatable tubular, and

wherein the floating structure moves independent of the assembly when the tubular is rotating.

16. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15, further comprising a flexible conduit for communicating the drilling fluid from the floating structure to the first housing opening.

17. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 16, wherein the flexible conduit has a first end and a second end, the first end connected to the first housing opening and the second end ~~connected to~~ in fluid communication with a device for pumping the drilling fluid into the housing.

18. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15, wherein at least a portion of the housing extends above the surface of the ocean.

19. (Currently Amended) The system of claim ~~[[15]]~~17, wherein the drilling fluid creates a mud cap ~~of a predetermined volume~~ at a ~~predetermined~~ downhole location within the annulus.

20. (Currently Amended) The system of claim ~~[[15]]~~17,
wherein the drilling fluid flows down the annulus to a downhole location, and
wherein a portion of the drilling fluid returns from the downhole location up the rotatable tubular.

21. (New) A method for drilling in a floor of an ocean from a structure floating at a surface of the ocean using a rotatable tubular and drilling fluid, comprising the steps of:

positioning a rotatable seal above an upper portion of a riser, the floating structure movable independent of the rotatable seal, at least a portion of the rotatable seal positioned above the surface of the ocean;

pumping the drilling fluid from the floating structure through a flexible conduit between the floating structure and the riser;

moving the drilling fluid from the floating structure through an annulus of the riser surrounding the rotatable tubular to a downhole location; and

forming a mud cap at the downhole location.

22. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein pumping the drilling fluid comprises:
pumping a volume of the drilling fluid from the floating structure through a flexible conduit between the floating structure and the housing.
23. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein pumping the drilling fluid comprises:
maintaining a desired pressure of the drilling fluid by pump rates.
24. (New) The method of claim 21, further comprising:
allowing debris and cuttings to flow into a theft zone below the mud cap.
25. (New) The method of claim 21, further comprising:
pumping the drilling fluid down the rotatable tubular.
26. (New) The method of claim 21, further comprising:
pressurizing the drilling fluid to a predetermined pressure.
27. (New) The method of claim 21, further comprising:
pressurizing additional drilling fluid above the mud cap to allow debris and cuttings to flow into a theft zone instead of being circulated up the annulus.
28. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

pressurizing the drilling fluid to a predetermined pressure.

29. (New) The method of claim 10, further comprising:
pressurizing the drilling fluid to a predetermined pressure.
30. (New) The method of claim 13, further comprising:
pressurizing the drilling fluid to a predetermined pressure.
31. (New) A method for drilling from a structure floating at a surface of an ocean,
comprising:
coupling the floating structure and a riser with a flexible conduit;
moving a drilling fluid from the floating structure via the flexible conduit to an
annulus of the riser surrounding a rotatable tubular; and
circulating a portion of the drilling fluid down the annulus and up the rotatable
tubular.
32. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:
pressurizing the drilling fluid to a predetermined pressure as the drilling fluid
flows into the annulus.
33. (New) The method of claim 31, moving a drilling fluid from the floating
structure comprising:
pumping the drilling fluid through the flexible conduit; and
managing a pressure of the drilling fluid in the annulus by controlling a pumping
rate of the drilling fluid.
34. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:
sealing the rotatable tubular to the riser with a rotatable seal, the rotatable seal
rotating with the rotatable tubular.

35. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:
sealing the rotatable tubular to the riser with a rotatable seal, the rotatable seal rotating with the rotatable tubular; and
maintaining a predetermined pressure of the drilling fluid with the rotating seal.
36. (New) The method of claim 34, wherein the flexible conduit communicates the drilling fluid to the annulus via the rotatable seal.
37. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:
moving the drilling fluid from the floating structure to the rotatable tubular; and
pressurizing the drilling fluid in the annulus at a higher pressure than the drilling fluid in the rotatable tubular.
38. (New) A method for drilling from a structure floating at a surface of an ocean, comprising:
disposing a housing with a portion of a riser, a portion of the housing extending above the surface of the ocean;
creating a mud cap at a downhole location, comprising:
communicating a drilling fluid from the floating structure to the housing via a flexible conduit;
moving the drilling fluid through the housing and into an annulus of the riser surrounding a rotatable tubular; and
moving the drilling fluid to a downhole location.
39. (New) The method of claim 38, further comprising:
introducing additional drilling fluids through the flexible conduit and into the annulus; and
pressurizing the annulus above the mud cap with the additional drilling fluids.

40. (New) The method of claim 38, communicating a drilling fluid from the floating structure via a flexible conduit comprising:

communicating the drilling fluid from a mud pump via the flexible conduit.

41. (New) The method of claim 38, further comprising:

compensating for relative movement of the floating structure and the housing using the flexible conduit.

42. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the housing is a housing of a rotating control head.

43. (New) The method of claim 38, further comprising:

allowing debris and cuttings to flow into a theft zone.

44. (New) The method of claim 38, the housing comprising:

a rotatable seal, disposed with and sealing the rotatable tubular with the riser.

45. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the downhole location is a predetermined downhole location.

46. (New) The method of claim 38, communicating a drilling fluid comprising:

communicating a predetermined volume of the drilling fluid.

47. (New) The method of claim 38, communicating a drilling fluid from the floating structure via a flexible conduit comprising:

pumping the drilling fluid from a mud pump via the flexible conduit;

further comprising:

pumping the drilling fluid into the rotatable tubular; and

managing a well bore pressure by pump rates.